



The Vermont Chapter of the Sierra Club is a volunteer-lead affiliate of the national Sierra Club. The Sierra Club is America's largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization, with more than 2.1 million members and supporters nationwide. The Sierra Club works to safeguard the health of our communities, protect wildlife, and preserve our remaining wild places through grassroots activism, public education, lobbying, and litigation. The Vermont Chapter of the Sierra Club currently has over 9,000 members and supporters.

### **Chapter Water Quality Campaign Primary Goal:**

Ensure that the clean-up plan for Lake Champlain is adequately designed and fully funded, and that the measures to clean up Lake Champlain are applicable to all of Vermont's waters.

**a. We support the establishment of a Vermont Clean Water Fund that prioritizes Lake Champlain. However, as all of Vermont's waters are vital, this Fund should be maintained and utilized for waters throughout the state as needed.**

- Administration of the Clean Water Fund must be transparent. Upon establishment of the Clean Water Fund, an annual report shall be submitted to the Legislature clearly listing how all funds are spent. In addition, the report will identify how federal, private, and other funds are allocated. The administration of the Fund shall be open and shall include meaningful citizen participation.
- The body charged with implementing the Fund shall include at least one member from a non-profit organization devoted to ensuring water quality in Vermont.
- We support designating more resources to VAAFM to assist farmers in transitioning to practices that do not degrade Vermont's waterways.
- The Clean Water Fund must include significant funds for compliance inspections and enforcement procedures.

**b. Vermont's water quality laws must be adequately enforced.**

- Significant monies from the Clean Water Fund should be devoted to compliance and enforcement resources.
- The State should inspect every regulated facility (whether agricultural, stormwater, or other) at least once every year. Any areas of potential problem must receive a follow-up inspection as soon as possible.
- The State must take a meaningful number of enforcement actions against violators with sufficient penalties to deter future violations.
- We recommend that the State consider transferring enforcement for all water-related issues to the Department of Environmental Conservation. The Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food, & Markets is a vital institution that promotes and assists the farming sector. DEC is better equipped to handle enforcement, while VAAFM is best equipped to be an advisor.



- We recommend that VAAFM and DEC deliver detailed yearly enforcement reports to the Legislature including:
  - Detailed descriptions of any complaints received regarding water quality issues or problems, and the agency's follow-up to those complaints.
  - All inspections made and the results of each inspection, e.g., whether violations or problem areas were noted.
  - Whether follow-up inspections were made where potential problem areas were observed, and why or why not.
  - For each violation, whether enforcement action was taken, a description of the enforcement action, and the reasoning supporting any decision to enforce or not enforce, including reasoning regarding the extent or severity of enforcement.

**c. Vermont's water quality laws must be strengthened.**

- It is time to strengthen Accepted Agricultural Practices to ensure that all farms are using practices that will prevent pollution from entering Vermont's waterways or otherwise degrading Vermont's soils.
- We support policies that disincentivize environmentally harmful behavior such as the overuse of fertilizers, particularly synthetic ones.
- We support an Impervious Surface Fee. As water issues are not exclusive to the Lake Champlain Basin, we recommend that the fee be assessed statewide on all development of impervious surfaces of a certain size.
- We support the transitioning of Vermont's waste water treatment facilities to technology that will achieve .2 or .1 mg/l or less of phosphorus output.

**d. We support the requirement that the Administration report back to the Legislature next year with recommendations regarding use value appraisal.**

Although the Chapter applauds the Governor's recognition that the State must do more to prevent agricultural pollution, we are concerned that the current use stick could become a "feel good" proposal with little enforcement presence. We strongly believe that enforcement of existing laws must be substantially increased.

**Vermont Chapter of the Sierra Club**

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